

A bill (S. 3100) to amend title 18, United States Code, to limit the misuse of social security numbers, to establish criminal penalties for such misuse, and for other purposes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. CARPER). The bills will be placed on the calendar.

EXTENSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. REID. Mr. President, the hour of 3 o'clock will be here in a minute or so. I ask unanimous consent that morning business be extended for an additional 30 minutes, with Senators permitted to speak therein, with the exception of Senator KENNEDY. I ask that he be granted 15 minutes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The Senator from Massachusetts is recognized.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of Calendar No. 619, S. 3009, a bill to provide for a 13-week extension of unemployment compensation; that the bill be read the third time, passed, and motion to reconsider be laid upon the table, without intervening action or debate.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Mr. NICKLES. Mr. President, reserving the right to object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oklahoma.

Mr. NICKLES. Mr. President, may I ask the sponsor of the bill, doesn't this, in effect, provide for a 26-week extension of Federal unemployment compensation instead of 13 weeks?

Mr. KENNEDY. The Senator is correct, for certain States that qualify. This is similar to what we did in the early 1990s. The Senator is quite correct.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oklahoma.

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, I think I have the floor. I propounded a unanimous-consent request for the immediate consideration of the measure.

Mr. NICKLES. I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. There is objection.

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, I regret, for the reasons I will outline just shortly, that we continue to have opposition of the Republican leadership to extending the unemployment compensation program that can make all the difference in the world for families who are running through their current unemployment compensation and have to meet their mortgage payments, have to pay for the food on their tables, have to support their children in schools. People are hurting. I can give a more detailed description of what is happening in the country, but I regret we continuously have an objection by our colleagues on the other side.

We know going back to the early 1990s, former President Bush objected to the extension of unemployment compensation and then, finally, saw the wisdom of it and indicated he would support the extension of unemployment compensation. We had a series of votes with more than 90 Members voting in favor of the extension of unemployment compensation for the very sound reason that these workers have paid in to the fund. The fund is in surplus, it now has some \$27 billion. The Senator is quite correct that it would cost approximately \$17 billion should this program go into effect now to assist those who have paid in to the program.

The point of unemployment compensation is, unless you have paid in, you do not receive. So these are funds that have already been paid by workers with the purpose in mind that if the economic conditions are such as at present, that if there is a temporary period where they cannot find jobs, this would help those families during those valleys. That was always the thought behind unemployment compensation. The fund is in surplus, and still there is an objection to the extension. It will make an enormous difference to close to 2 million families in this country by the end of the year and 3 million by the early part of February.

There was one comment my friend from Oklahoma stressed, and that is: Where are the appropriations bills? Congress has not done its work; we have only considered 2 out of the 13 appropriations bills. The last time I read the Constitution, the appropriations bills originated in the House of Representatives, and that happens to be under Republican leadership. Do you understand? That is under Republican leadership. So when the good Senator said Congress is at fault, we know where the fault lies in terms of the appropriations bills which he mentioned.

THE UNFINISHED BUSINESS OF AMERICA'S WORKING FAMILIES

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, I congratulate our leader and thank him for an excellent address this afternoon. I also thank my friend and colleague, the Senator from Michigan, Ms. STABENOW, who has been such a leader on the issue of prescription drugs. The leader was much too self-assuming when he failed to take credit for the fact that this was the first time the Senate has ever debated a prescription drug program, and it was done so because we had a Democratic leader, TOM DASCHLE, who insisted we call up this legislation.

I heard earlier today: We did not have a prescription drug bill because the Finance Committee could not do one. For 5 of the last 6 years, the Republicans have been in charge of the Senate, and when they were in charge, we never had a prescription drug bill. The American people ought to understand that. Before one cries crocodile

tears at the pleading of my friend from Oklahoma, the fact is the Senate never considered a bill because the Finance Committee could not complete a bill, and the Democratic leader brought a bill to the floor of the Senate.

We passed a good bill, not the bill I would have liked to have seen, a program that would have been built upon the Medicare system. I thought we had guaranteed that in 1965 when we committed to the seniors of this country: Play by the rules and pay into the Medicare system, and your health care needs are going to be attended to. We did not say "with the exception of prescription drugs."

That is what has happened, Mr. President. Every day we fail our seniors, we break that commitment and pledge to them. The Republicans had 5 years to report out a bill, and they failed to do so. Thank you, TOM DASCHLE, and thank you, DEBBIE STABENOW, for standing up, and thank you for the bipartisan effort we had to support a program that would have done something about lowering the cost of prescription drugs and, as the Senator from Michigan has pointed out, as well as our leader, that is being held hostage by the Republican leadership in the House of Representatives.

Make no mistake about it, the Democrats happen to be on the side of seniors. We were on their side in the early 1960s when we fought for Medicare. If our Republican friends are against the Medicare Program, why don't they just come out and say it? They at least used to have the courage to do so. They do not now. They just say they differ with it or there is some other procedure or failure of some committee meeting. They used to at least have the courage to say they oppose it. They do not say that anymore. They try to give some other excuse. We are strongly committed, as the Senator from Michigan and the Senator from South Dakota have pointed out.

Mr. President, in the time I have remaining, I wish to highlight three very important areas, and these are areas which our leader, the Senator from South Dakota, Mr. DASCHLE, has mentioned, but I want to review them one more time.

More than 8 million Americans are competing for just over 3 million jobs. Maybe the Senator from Oklahoma does not believe we have an economic crisis, but he can travel with me through many of the New England States, including my State of Massachusetts, where we have the highest unemployment of any of the New England States. Talk to families there who, if they have not lost a job, they know members of a family who have or they know of a neighbor who has, and they have friends down the street who are seeing foreclosures on homes. This is the highest rate of foreclosures since the Depression, and we sit around in the Senate and say, We do not have an economic crisis?

We have double-digit inflation in health care, and we still say: It is not